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The Presentist Threat to Editions of Shakespeare

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I

There are good and bad ways to be Presentist. In the sense used in some of the essays in this collection, the term reappropriates a pejorative word. Historians decry as Presentist any writing that anachronistically imports to the study of the past the concerns of the present. Since the nineteenth century—and under the influence of the empiricist historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), who insisted on the centrality of primary sources—historians have striven for an ideal of scholarship that seeks to understand the past in its own terms rather than applying to it the standards, concepts, and norms of the present. Holding this as an ideal has not blinded historians to the impossibility of achieving it: they were and are quite aware that one cannot entirely leave behind one's present-day assumptions and prejudices in order imaginatively to enter the past without intellectual baggage. The very necessity of attending to one body of evidence rather than another—because rarely can one attend to all the available evidence at once—shapes the narratives that historians write, as Ranke's followers knew.

The key to historical discipline is keeping one's methodological selectivity in view. While not necessarily agreeing that the primary sources could support conclusions entirely opposite to the ones being drawn in a given study, those who followed Ranke would freely admit that alternative narratives might emerge from consideration of other primary sources of comparable value that had not been considered. In evaluating the sources, Rankean historians

attempt to imagine what it was like to live at that point in the past and in ignorance of future events known to the historian. One way of failing to do this is teleology, in which events of the past are read as though they inevitably led to the present that embodies their completion, and/or in which historical perspectives available only with hindsight are imputed to agents within those events. Herbert Butterfield found an example of this in what he called *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931), a nineteenth-century view of British constitutional and social development that celebrated its culmination in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.¹ This was Presentism in the bad sense. Presentism as discussed in several essays in this volume, however, redefines the term on the principle that the historians' ideal of objectivity is at best a self-delusion. According to this new definition, we bring to the past so much baggage from the present that objectivity is impossible, and the most honest approach is to be entirely explicit about this and declare that our interpretations are always utterly shaped by present concerns. The unspoken injunction here is to follow the example of politicized gay criticism that in the 1980s and 1990s reappropriated the term "queer": we should declare our Presentism rather than pretending that it does not exist.

In the past ten years, Presentism has become a way of doing literary criticism by explicitly evoking the present concerns that motivate a desire to reread old literature (especially Shakespeare) to discover resonances that it could not have had for its first audiences or readers, because these only became possible as a consequence of what happened between then and now. As such, it is a reaction against the dominant mode of historicist analysis that rose to prominence after the publication in 1980 of Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and the New Historicism that it inaugurated.² In 1996, Hugh Grady complained that this historicizing movement had become so dominant that "more 'presentist' approaches—that is, those oriented towards the text's meaning in the present, as opposed to 'historicist' approaches oriented to meanings in the past—are in danger of eclipse."³ Grady was distinguishing just what a moment in Shakespeare might have meant to early modern readers and playgoers from what that moment might mean to readers and playgoers today. The New Historicism was indebted to Clifford Geertz's literary approach to anthropology, which asked of each activity being studied "What does it mean to these people?"—a question that

Greenblatt projected from the geographical to the temporal domain in order to understand the early moderns.⁴

Done properly, historicism bridges the gap between past meanings and present ones. To treat past meanings as utterly isolated in their own time mistakes the nature of human communication, since if the chasm were unbridgeable then we could make no sense at all of Shakespeare's works. To give a concrete example, Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass have pointed out that modernizing Shakespeare's spelling tends to flatten into monovocality words that were equivocal in the original. Fluidity of spelling allowed the word we modernize as *hair* in *Macbeth* to attract the forms and senses of "'hair,' 'heir,' 'heire,' 'heere,' and 'here'" and the modern *heir* to trigger "'heir,' 'aire,' 'are,' 'haire,' and 'here.'" Early modern English permitted such multiple associations, while "Modernization requires that this slippage be contained."⁵ However, were modern readers truly unable to hear *hair* as *heir* as well as *air*, then the problem would be insuperable: even an editorial footnote could not clarify the point, which would be unintelligible. De Grazia and Stallybrass were right that readers can no longer easily enjoy this equivocality on the page, but it is still recoverable with effort. Most importantly, of course, such multiplicities remain readily active in performance, since the homophones *heir* and *air* are aurally identical.

One kind of literary theory still posits such unbridgeable gulfs between interpretive communities. As Terry Eagleton wittily put it, "Nobody can seriously disagree with Stanley Fish," not because Fish is right, but because according to his model of communication you either share his discursive world and are able to understand and accept what he is saying, or you do not and your objections "present no more challenge to his case than the cawing of a rook."⁶ Happily, communication is more interestingly engaged than that. We neither speak past one another as though using different languages nor adopt one another's ideas as self-evident; rather, in conversation we reflect on those differences of opinion that we can grasp, howsoever imperfectly and precariously, and frequently enough we transform ourselves by imaginatively making sense of them. So it is with our attempts to understand the past, and editors of Shakespeare are at the sharp end of the problem of imperfect communication, because their prime objective is to help readers better understand what they are reading.

Presentism shares with Marxist historicist criticism a rejection of the idea that meaning is something transhistorical and transcultural embedded in writing from the past; and both insist on its being generated at the point of consumption by modern readers. Making an edition of Shakespeare gives a practical illustration of the problems that follow from this rejection. Editors want to make works from 400 years ago accessible to modern readers, so they modernize the spelling, which seems like a Presentist activity: privileging of the needs of today over the conservation of the past's alterity. Yet, they usually also want to render the past accurately in all its puzzling alterity—Why were they so cruel to animals? Did they really think the monarch had two bodies?—and that seems like a historicist activity. Like other historians, editors build a bridge to cross the chasm between the past and the present, having first constructed that very chasm in their narratives. It is hard not to suspect that the chasm is constructed to fit the bridge rather than vice versa. That is, as professionals working on the problem, we specify the extent of the past's difference from the present as precisely the amount of difference that we feel able to overcome in our explications. This regrettable tendency may flourish unchecked in purely critical work, but in editing plays it is countered by the need to produce a legible text. Although the editor has at her disposal the tools of an introduction, explanatory notes, and glossaries to assist in the process, the script itself must be clear enough for the ordinary reader to follow the action and understand the characters' actions and motivations. This requirement of clarity generates special problems for textual criticism's engagement with history, as we shall see.

II

The editing of Shakespeare did not become a fully developed scholarly activity until the early twentieth century. The Cambridge–Macmillan complete works of 1863–6 was the first produced by university-employed scholars using an openly expressed bibliographical methodology, arrived at after examining afresh the entire textual situation of Shakespeare.⁷ Rather than putting the subject to rest, the entrance of professionals into what had previously been the gentleman-scholar's private domain brought an explosion of new theory and practice in editing early modern drama that soon became

known as the New Bibliography, a term coined by the movement's early leader W. W. Greg.⁸ In editing Shakespeare, the principles of the New Bibliography reigned virtual unchallenged until the 1980s, when a number of its premises were undermined by the rival New Textualism. The full story of this challenge need not detain us and is told elsewhere.⁹ For our purposes there are two key points to be borne in mind.

The first is that the New Bibliography presented itself as disinterested historical investigation into the early editions, unencumbered by twentieth-century preconceptions, while most New Textualists were somewhat Presentist (*avant la lettre*) in their explicit invocation of post-modern concerns with incredulity, incoherence, and instability. The second point is that although disquiet about the approach was voiced in various quarters, the New Bibliographers tended to assume that each play came to fruition in one complete version that remained essentially unchanged during its early life on the stage. This meant that where there exist differing early editions of a play, it was assumed that all were derived from a single original and differ only because varying kinds of corruption entered the text during its aural, scribal, and print transmission. The task then was to recover that original—or get as close as possible to it—by combining evidence from the various debased “witnesses.” The New Textualists, by contrast, saw no reason to assume the existence of a singular original, thinking instead that the various early editions might represent distinct versions of the play, separated by authorial and nonauthorial revision that suited the script to the needs of particular times and places. If so, the early editions ought not to be ranked and combined to make a singular modern text, but rather respected for their diversity and given “equal but different” status.

To see the consequences of these divergent approaches, we may take as a test case a multi-text play that has recently been edited twice, once according to essentially New Bibliographic principles and once by the lights of New Textualism. After that, we will consider what these methodologies mean for the editor faced with precisely the opposite problem, because the play survives not in two relatively good early editions but in just one that is highly corrupt. A comparison of the practical effects of these divergent approaches to editing casts new light on the problems to which Presentism addresses itself and throws into relief a peculiar paradox. As literary critics,

Presentists occupy the left of the political spectrum from liberalism to full-blown revolutionary Marxism, and favor interpretations that are politically progressive or radical. However, it is not exactly clear whether these politics are best served by asserting that the past was essentially like the present, in which case its concerns are our concerns and we may draw lessons from the situations described by writers such as Shakespeare, or was essentially unlike the present, in which case we may draw from it the optimistic conclusion that the future may be equally different from the present, too. In editing, the link between theory and practice is even more tenuous. From the test cases examined here, it appears that radical textual intervention may produce a text that is amenable to conservative critical interpretation and that textual conservatism may produce radical readings. The law of unanticipated consequences seems to apply strongly to editing, and the conclusion to this essay will offer some suggestions for how editors might work under these conditions.

In 1595, Thomas Millington published Shakespeare's *Richard Duke of York* in octavo format (O); he used an exemplar of this octavo to republish the play as a quarto in 1600 (Q2). Two years later, Millington transferred his rights in the play to Thomas Pavier, who published a quarto in 1619 (Q3), again set from an exemplar of O. In Pavier's edition the play was paired with *The Contention of York and Lancaster*, which told the preceding story, under the combined title of *The Whole Contention*. When *Richard Duke of York* appeared in the 1623 Folio, it had around 1,000 lines not previously printed and was given the new title *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth*, by which it is now more familiarly known. For editors of the play, the first problem is to establish the relationships between the early editions, and it was from errors in common that they discovered that Q2 and Q3 were merely unauthoritative reprints of O. Only O and F were printed directly from manuscripts, but determining what these were and how they were related to one another is fundamental for using the evidence in O and F to make a modern edition.

In 2001 two modern editions of the play appeared taking different approaches to this problem, one in the Oxford Shakespeare series, edited by Randall Martin, and the other in the Arden Shakespeare Third Series, edited by John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen.¹⁰ Surveying the differences between the two nonderivative early editions, Martin came to the conclusion that F was printed from the author's

own papers (which would reflect the play's form prior to rehearsal and reshaping in performance), while O was printed from a script put together by the actors remembering what they had said and done in performance.¹¹ Evidence for F's origin in authorial papers are the incompleteness, indefiniteness, and vagueness in its stage directions—although Martin acknowledged recent scholarship that questioned the assumption that only authorial papers would have such unsatisfactory directions—and the presence of actors' names where we should expect characters' names. An instance of the latter is F's direction "*Enter Sinklo and Humfrey, with Crosse-bowes in their hands*,"¹² apparently referring to the Chamberlain's Men's actor John Sincklo, known from other plays. The traditional New Bibliographical explanation is that an actor's name would take the place of his character's name only in the dramatist's papers and that this showed the dramatist making or reflecting a casting decision of some importance. In papers used to run performances of the play, on the other hand, someone in the theatre might gloss the name of a minor character with the name of the actor playing it (just to remind himself), but then both names would appear.

The whole problem of how editors should designate character names for the modern readership engages wider questions about the meaning of variations within the early editions. Under the influence of literary theory, New Textualists are apt to find significance in all kinds of textual variation and to label them as instances of instability and self-contradiction. Leah Marcus thought that when comparing the 1622 quarto and 1623 Folio editions of *Othello*, the important matter is to reveal "how a given text differs from itself."¹³ This claim is unintelligible since *differ* and *self* have opposite meanings, but the idea has become a New Textualist shibboleth. Randall McLeod used "non-identity with itself" to describe textual multiplicity¹⁴; Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass echoed him by calling multi-version editions of *King Lear* and *Hamlet* symptoms of "the problem of a work's nonidentity with itself."¹⁵ Meredith Skura deflated this New Textualist assumption that variation reveals the ontological vulnerability of texts with an apt theatre-historical comparison: "there are other valid responses to the two texts of *King Lear* besides assuming that there is no *King Lear* or no Shakespeare—just as there are other responses to the two floor plans for the Rose Theater [the original of 1587 and the refurbishment of the 1592] besides assuming that there was no Rose Theater."¹⁶

In particular, the variation in the names given to a single character in early editions of Shakespeare is diagnosed by New Textualists as an early modern anticipation of the instability of human personality discovered by modernism and post-modernism. In this view, a modern editor who regularizes character names is imposing super-egotistical orderliness where the early documents display the fluidity and chaos of the id. Or, to switch from the modernist language of Sigmund Freud to that of Louis Althusser who combined these ideas with Marxism, an editor who regularizes character names does the work of ideology in giving a fictional coherence to a mere collection of fragmentary social functions that each person fills in society.

According to John Drakakis, only an editor deluded enough to believe in “some stable conception of dramatic ‘character’” would want to overrule the naming “instability” (that is, variation) found in the early editions.¹⁷ This kind of reasoning first emerged in the early 1990s when British Cultural Materialists, the group within which Drakakis came to prominence in the 1980s, became aware of the New Bibliographical editorial tradition and rejected it as an ally of conservative criticism. A typical early example is Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey’s complaint that in the Folio text of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Christopher Sly’s speech prefixes identify him as *Beg[gar]* yet modern editors give him the speech prefix *Sly*. Thus, “The substitution of an original emphasis on public identity and social function for a modern emphasis on personality and the individual subject... is a clear instance of modern editors imposing anachronistic values on an early modern text.”¹⁸

In the Folio text of *Richard Duke of York / 3 Henry 6*, Lady Grey is first designated as *Wid[ow]* in speech prefixes and then becomes *Lady Grey*; according to New Bibliography, such variation could occur because in the act of composition (reflected in the author’s own papers) Shakespeare would think in relational terms. Hence, to take the most famous example, in the second quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* (1599), Capulet’s wife speaks variously as a wife, a mother, and a lady and has corresponding speech prefixes as *Wif[e]*, *Mo[ther]*, or *La[dy]* in different scenes. According to New Bibliography, in a document used for running performances the theatre personnel would regularize this variation to a single identifier to prevent possible confusion about who is meant. In this view, name variation points to the vicissitudes of authorial composition. For New Bibliographers, the clinching

evidence for O deriving not from authorial papers or a transcript of them but rather from the actors' recollection of their lines is its garbling of Richard and Clarence's complaint to their brother Edward about the royal marriage settlements he has approved.¹⁹ Although O's rendering of this complaint makes grammatical sense, it is impossible to understand what Richard and Clarence are upset about. A glance at F's version of the same complaint makes it obvious that O has jumbled the names of the brides and grooms. When unjumbled, the basis of Richard and Clarence's grievance is clear: their brother Edward, the new king, has favored the Woodvilles (the existing family of his new wife, the widow Lady Grey) over them. According to New Bibliography, only actors could make such a jumble.

There are other O/F differences, however, that are hard to explain as F representing the authorial script and O representing what was performed by the actors working on and revising this script. Martin found in F a series of metaphors using the wind, sea, and tide as images to represent Henry's rising and falling fortunes, and these images are absent in O. It seems unlikely that before the play was performed someone went through it to delete just these images, or that the actors selectively forgot them when recalling their lines.²⁰ Rather, it seems that Shakespeare revised the play to put these images in and these revisions also got marked on the manuscript underlying F. Martin found a series of other O/F differences of staging that are best explained by authorial revision, so that memorial reconstruction and authorial revision separate O and F. Since F represents Shakespeare's more considered expression of his intention, Martin took it as the basis for his modernized edition. Martin's position on the provenance of the early editions was squarely within the tradition of the New Bibliography, using its methods for inferring from particular features of the printed text the nature of the manuscript copy from which it was set.

Cox and Rasmussen's view of the textual genealogy was somewhat different. After airing some doubts, they accepted that O was probably made by memorial reconstruction of the script by its actors.²¹ They cast doubt on the interpretation of evidence usually understood as showing that the Folio text was printed from the author's papers.²² Cox and Rasmussen decided that an actor's name (such as *Sinklo*) might appear in theatrical papers if someone made a single document containing all the lines for the many small parts that one

actor played in the story and wanted to record his name. Variation in speech prefixes could be introduced in the print shop, either because of type shortage (certain names being avoided because the printer was short of particular letters) or because a different typesetter, with different preferences, took over at the point where the change occurs. More simply, theatre practitioners might not bother to regularize speech prefixes because they did not find it confusing to have to remember that *Widow* and *Lady Grey* are the same person. What follows from Cox and Rasmussen's demurrals from the New Bibliography? Their prime conclusion was that they could not be sure that O was based on a memorial reconstruction and F on authorial papers, hence they did "not want to prejudice interpretation by pronouncing one text more authoritative than the other or even by attaching such labels as *original* and *revision*."²³ Yet, their edition was based principally on F with readings from O imported as needed.²⁴ Martin, by contrast, was clear that the Folio is an expansion and revision of the play represented by O, and thus for him F's variant passages were to be followed except in a few cases of "error, omission, or indispensable clarification."²⁵ Let us look at what this difference of approach means in practice.

Because they could not tell which early text is more authoritative, there was nothing to stop Cox and Rasmussen importing from O anything they found preferable to the reading in their copy text, F. Thus, the memorable detail of Clifford dying from an arrow in his neck (as recorded in the historical sources) was included in Cox and Rasmussen's edition (taken from O), while Martin, following F, omitted it. Paradoxically, being skeptical about the relative authority of O and F increased Cox and Rasmussen's freedom to depart from their copy. In Act 5, Scene 1, Clarence's abandonment of Warwick's cause and his return to his brothers' side is staged differently in O and F. In O, Clarence enters apparently to assist Warwick in holding the fortified town of Coventry, but when a parley is sounded, "*Richard and Clarence* whispers together" and then Clarence "takes his red Rose out of his hat, and throws it at *Warwike*."²⁶ In F, however, there is no parley with Richard and no rose throwing, yet Clarence nonetheless breaks from Warwick, so we have to conclude that he intended to do so before the start of this scene.²⁷

Martin followed F's action, but because it offers no stage direction for the moment of Clarence's break from Warwick, he invented "*He*

shows a red rose" to accompany Clarence's line "Look here, I throw my infamy at thee."²⁸ This invented stage direction is prescriptive in asserting that what Clarence shows is a rose—nothing in F requires this—but leaves unstated just what he does with it, and so falls short of the required elucidation. Cox and Rasmussen also followed F's action—no whispering between Richard and Clarence, no on-stage change of heart—but they drew on O's wording for their stage directions "*Takes the red rose out of his hat*" and "*Throws it at Warwick*."²⁹ Thus, Cox and Rasmussen gave weight to specific details of O's stage directions—allowing them to prescribe the action more strongly than Martin did—even though they rejected O's variant action.

Cox and Rasmussen's prescriptive approach might be thought the symptom of an admirable concern for clarity above all other considerations, were it not for aspects of their text that explicitly sacrifice clarity in order to press home a thoroughly modern critical point. For example, they retained F's variability in Lady Grey's speech prefixes, calling her *Widow* in Act 3, Scene 2 because she is known to the audience only as a widow at this point and her widowhood is what attracts Edward. Giving her yet another name, they commented: "In our view, preserving the potent ideological implications of Lady Elizabeth's functional identity as *Widow* in this scene far outweighs the need to iron out this anomaly in the text for the modern reader."³⁰ Rather than preserving the implications of name variation, this kind of intervention on ideological grounds imposes variation in a distinctly Presentist matter, in the old-fashioned bad sense of the term.

Many characters in Shakespeare's plays have names of which the audience long remains ignorant, if indeed it ever learns them. Viola's name is first uttered, and thus revealed to the audience, in the last ten minutes of performances of *Twelfth Night*, and the king's name in *Hamlet* and the duke's in *Measure for Measure* (Claudius and Vincentio respectively) are never disclosed to the audience. Name variation is endemic in Shakespeare. For example, Bolingbroke is "Harry of Hereford, Lancaster, and Derby" (*Richard 2* 1.3.35–6) and then the Duke of Lancaster before becoming King Henry 4. Editorial consistency of naming in stage directions and speech prefixes nonetheless reflects early performance practice, since despite name variation just one actor took each role. Editorial consistency of naming also clarifies the play for modern readers without distorting performability,

since the affected stage directions and speech prefixes are not spoken. Once admitted as criteria for editorial intervention, the ideological potencies of anonymity and name variation allow the plays to speak to our critical concerns, but at the cost of readers' comprehension and of performability.

III

Judging just how far to intervene to repair apparent textual corruption is among the editor's most difficult tasks, and the state of the 1609 quarto of *Pericles*,³¹ the only authoritative witness, presents a particularly testing case. The previous year there appeared an anonymous prose novella called *The Painful Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*, which is traditionally attributed to the dramatist George Wilkins and seems to draw on the play as performed.³² The novella's title page calls it "The true History of the play of *Pericles*, as it was lately presented by the worthy ancient Poet *John Gower*," and a common assumption is that Wilkins collaborated on the play with Shakespeare and then published this prose version of it (drawing also on another source of the story) without the King's Men's permission. Other pieces of evidence can be used to bolster this assumption, such as the fairly clear signs that the play *Pericles* was collaboratively written by Shakespeare and someone else, since stylistically the first two acts of *Pericles* are unlike, and the last three are like, his work elsewhere.

MacDonald P. Jackson showed that Wilkins's style elsewhere matches the first two acts of the play,³³ but as John Klause pointed out, there may be other writers ignored by Jackson whose style would also match the first two acts of *Pericles*.³⁴ Wilkins's is the presumptive candidate for collaboration if we accept that he wrote the prose novella, but that attribution is not entirely secure. There survive only two copies of *The Painful Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*, neither of which identifies Wilkins as the author, and the only link is that one of them has a dedication signed by him, apparently created as an afterthought during the print run and inserted before binding.³⁵ Depending on her view of Wilkins's possible involvement in the writing of the play with Shakespeare, an editor might decide that *The Painful Adventures* provides an independent source from which to correct errors in the 1609 quarto of the play, since, if written by one

of the two dramatists and reporting what got performed, it might well preserve readings lost in the play quarto.

As Gary Taylor pointed out, the degree to which editors emend a text ought to vary from work to work according to the diagnosed degree and type of corruption in the textual witnesses, but in practice editors tend to be temperamentally inclined to heavy or light intervention that they apply indiscriminately to all the works they handle. As Taylor put it, often the amount of emendation will have “more to do with the emendation-threshold of the individual editor than with the corruption-quotient of the individual texts.”³⁶ In 2004, the Arden Shakespeare Third Series and Oxford Shakespeare published competing editions of *Pericles* that illustrate Taylor’s point, the play being emended lightly by Suzanne Gossett and heavily by Roger Warren respectively. In its own way, each edition showed the impresure of modern concerns: Gossett’s in respect of modern theory, especially feminism, and Warren’s in respect of modern performance. The latter was manifested as an interest in what modern performers do to a script, expressed not merely as a desire to serve their needs but, more radically, as a editorial guide for how far to take emendation in places where the quarto is likely to be corrupt.

Gossett’s Preface announced that she wanted to maintain a “typically postmodern diffidence towards proposed solutions to the problems of the play’s text,”³⁷ which in practice meant being reluctant to depart from the 1609 quarto’s readings where they are possibly correct and giving little credence at such moments to the prose novella’s alternative readings. Warren, on the other hand, entirely accepted the principles first put forward in the “Reconstructed Text” of the play for the 1986 Oxford *Complete Works*,³⁸ and extensively patched the bad play quarto from the novella. Indeed, Warren went further than the *Complete Works* in the process he described thus: “where the ‘verse-fossils’ in Wilkins’s narrative offer more plausible readings [than the play quarto], the text is reconstructed by re-casting those verse-fossils back into blank verse.”³⁹ Highlighting his involvement in professional productions of the play, Warren claimed that “textual and theatrical issues are interdependent”⁴⁰ and reported that “directors have regularly drawn on passages from Wilkins to provide themselves with a more performable script.”⁴¹

A useful illustration of the effects of Gossett and Warren’s different philosophies of editing occurs in scene 6 (=2.2), where in preparation

for a tournament six knights (including Pericles) present themselves and their ceremonial shields bearing painted devices called *impresa* that are accompanied by foreign-language mottoes. Princess Thaisa describes each *impresa* and reads aloud its motto, and King Simonides interprets their combined meaning. Or rather, that is how the prose novella shows the action: in the play quarto, Simonides unaccountably fails to interpret the second, third, and fifth knights' *impresa* and mottoes. Warren filled the gaps in the play quarto using material from the prose novella, so that all six mottoes are interpreted, while Gossett followed the play quarto and left three of them uninterpreted. Claire Preston showed that the relationship between an *impresa*'s picture and its motto can be likened to the relationship inherent in a simile and to the narration of ostended events,⁴² which links this scene to the play's central concerns about aural versus visual meanings. Thus, the incomplete interpretation of *impresa* in the play quarto is of considerable importance to criticism.

Shakespeare himself wrote the text for an *impresa* painted by Richard Burbage for Francis Manners, sixth Earl of Rutland, to use at the tilt on 24 March 1613, the king's accession day.⁴³ Michael Leslie argued that, unlike the more familiar emblems, *impresa* were intended to be cryptic; where the former speak of universal truths, the latter seek to conceal their meanings, to be paradoxically recondite in a context of public display—a tournament—and so remain mysterious to “all but the most appropriate of readers.”⁴⁴ An *impresa* was the embodiment of the aristocratic spirit and epitomised its exclusivity, so Simonides's inherent nobility would be demonstrated by his ability to translate the mottoes and make sense of them in relation to the images. There is a contemporary analogue for the play quarto's version of the action: as Inga-Stina Ewbank noted,⁴⁵ the fifth act of Thomas Middleton's *Your Five Gallants*—first performed, like *Pericles*, in 1607—dramatizes young men revealing their unworthiness by failing to understand the Latin mottoes of the *impresa* they carry.⁴⁶

Faced with an undeniably corrupt authority for the play, the 1609 quarto, an editor has to decide whether Simonides not interpreting all six *impresa* is one of its many lacunae or to trust its presentation of a Simonides unable to make sense of some *impresa*. Warren's radical intervention of patching the quarto from the prose novella, defended on the grounds that directors do this anyway, made for a psychologically less complex Simonides—he is unproblematically

noble—than the flawed one who emerged from Gossett’s diffident adherence to the quarto. That is, the cautious editorial approach, Gossett’s, made the psychologically more complex character and Warren’s bold approach the simpler.

Such a paradoxical intersection of textual corruption and characterological complexity recurs in scene 19 (=4.5) in which Lysimachus, governor of Mytilene, meets his future wife Marina, Pericles’s daughter, when visiting a brothel, and is persuaded by her to repent his lasciviousness. In the play quarto this remarkable conversion seems to happen rather too quickly, in that Marina speaks just 17 lines (comprising 138 words) before Lysimachus says, “I did not thinke thou couldst haue spoke so well... had I brought hither a corrupted minde, thy speeche had altered it.”⁴⁷ Gossett expressed the editorial tradition in commenting that “her brief lines seem scarcely adequate to bring about his conversion.”⁴⁸ The prose novella has a longer version of their exchange and Warren drew on it to expand the scene, so that Lysimachus’s conversion comes after extensive eloquence from Marina. In Shakespeare, it is possible for a radical change in character to come about suddenly. Romeo speaks just 19 lines to Juliet before she comments, “My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words | Of thy tongue’s uttering” and they promptly declare their mutual love (*Romeo and Juliet* 2.1.100–1). Although Juliet underestimates the number of Romeo’s words (he has spoken 148 to her), the point is clear: they need few words.

Editorially supplying for Marina more lines by versifying the prose novella (as Warren did on performance grounds) makes for a more eloquent and rhetorically adept young heroine, “more assertive, more ‘feminist,’” as Gossett put it.⁴⁹ Gossett did not wholeheartedly reject such an approach. Her comment that “editors’ commitments, including their sexual politics, have varied radically over the centuries and need not reflect those of the authors” seems like an argument against the approach, but Gossett’s main reason for deciding not to draw from the prose novella was that doing so would require confidence about the relationship between the play quarto and the prose novella. In our “postmodern age of fragmentation,” she wrote, no one wants to hear an “all-encompassing hegemonic explanation,” so Gossett confined herself to “more limited intervention.”⁵⁰ Yet, as we have seen, the more limited textual intervention can make for psychologically more complex characters, and by contrast Warren’s

theatrical Presentism smoothes the play's wrinkles and simplifies characters. According to Gossett, because the play quarto shows "indeterminacy, uncertainty, irresolvability," the editor's approach should be "post-modern, post-structuralist,"⁵¹ which puzzlingly can mean just leaving the text alone.

Gossett gave feminism its place in editing, but confined to fairly small changes that she called "inflections," such as respecting the play quarto's lack of a stage direction so that in scene 11 (= 3.1), the midwife who hands Pericles his baby Marina is allowed to stay on stage with him as he bewails the apparent death of his wife, rather than exiting and taking the baby with her. Midwives were well thought of and there is no reason a man should not "emote with a baby in his arms."⁵² The lesson here appears to be that whereas a critic may use her Presentist convictions to shape her interpretations in ways that are straightforward and predictable, in editing, the relationship between one's convictions and their effects on the text is indirect and convoluted, leading to unanticipated consequences. Not only are there competing Presentisms—here, theatrical versus theoretical—but their textual outcomes are not predictable from their premises.

IV

At the core of recent debates about editorial intervention is a difference of approach that was fully manifested within the New Bibliography, although critics of this tradition have tended to misrepresent it as a narrow church of inflexible dogma. One of New Bibliography's founders, R. B. McKerrow, advocated "best-text" editing:⁵³ having chosen the most authoritative early edition, the editor should "reprint this as exactly as possible save for manifest and indubitable errors."⁵⁴ New Bibliography's co-founder W. W. Greg disagreed:⁵⁵ in "The Rationale of Copy-Text" he argued against "undue deference to the copy-text"⁵⁶ and proposed that where authority seems split between two early editions, an editor might get closest to what the author wrote by synthesizing them rather than privileging one over the other. Greg's arguments dominated Shakespeare editing from the 1950s to the 1990s, but since then the New Textualism has deprecated eclecticism in favor of respecting the supposed integrity of the early editions.⁵⁷ However, rather than choosing the best early

edition, New Textualists have tended to celebrate the differences between early editions, refusing to discriminate. This tendency has spawned modern reprints of unauthoritative early editions—done poorly as “Shakespearean Originals: First Editions” and done well as “The New Cambridge Shakespeare: Early Quartos”—and has encouraged the Arden Shakespeare Third Series to include at the back of each volume, where appropriate, a photofacsimile of an exemplar of the early edition not used as the basis of the modern one.⁵⁸

A logical consequence of refusing to label one early edition as the best is that for a given play, each nonderivative early edition must be presented to the modern reader. This happened with *Romeo and Juliet* in the Oxford Shakespeare edition of 2000, edited by Jill L. Levenson, which provided fully edited versions of the first two quartos, published in 1597 and 1599.⁵⁹ For the Arden Shakespeare Third Series *Hamlet*, Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor provided fully edited versions of the bad quarto of 1603, the good quarto of 1604–5, and the Folio text of 1623.⁶⁰ Where there is clear evidence of authorial revision, such a policy makes sense. One cannot conflate two editions separated by revision, since it is likely that elements unique to each are alternative ways of handling something—for example, different reasons for Hamlet apologizing to Laertes before the duel in the final scene⁶¹—and hence combining them produces at best supererogation and at worst contradiction, neither of which the dramatist wanted. But without a hypothesis of revision, there can be no coherent case for respecting the integrity of multiple early editions, since the differences between them can be attributed only to textual corruption.

McKerrow’s best-text principle was founded on discrimination: the early edition thought to contain the least corruption (from actors, scribes, and printers) gives us the best chance of recovering what the dramatist wrote. Logically, one cannot combine a respect for the integrity of each edition with a refusal to discriminate between them, since all the plays were at some point reprinted. To reject a reprint in favor of the edition it reprints is an act of discrimination, so an editor’s preference for foundational documents over recent ones is itself predicated on the existence of a rank order of editions. An editor who abandons discrimination might as well take the latest Oxford or Arden off the shelf and mark it up with alterations to make a new edition. If one discriminates between editions, as the return to early documents requires, then it makes no sense to cease discriminating

as one approaches the earliest editions, just where the task becomes most difficult and most necessary. The discrimination cannot stop when we have worked back to one or more nonderivative editions, since manuscript origins must also be looked into. New Textualists deprecate inquiry into the (now lost) manuscript copy behind each nonderivative early edition on the grounds that such origins are unknowable. This is illogical, since the very act of distinguishing derivative from nonderivative editions is itself an investigation into printer's copy—asking whether it was print or manuscript—and there is nothing special about manuscript copy that puts it off limits to the editor.

The essence of Presentism in its newly minted positive sense is the careful selection of evidence and transparent disclosure of what may be lost or distorted by the selection, which, as Presentists have pointed out, is also historical scholarship executed to the highest standards. Where there exist competing Presentist claims on the editor's attention—as with modern theory and modern performance as we have seen—it is entirely reasonable for an editor to choose between the available imperatives, so long as this is explained and the consequences indicated. The result will be that modern editions of the same play may be markedly different from one another—as the Arden and Oxford *Pericles* editions are—but so long as the premises that gave rise to these differences are clear, the discipline, and indeed the bookselling marketplace, can sustain such variety.

On a very rough average and with notable exceptions, the Arden Shakespeare Third Series has tended to represent the New Textualist trend in editing and the Oxford Shakespeare the New Bibliographical. The exceptions are instructive of the importance of discrimination in the editor's practice. Levenson's refusal to discriminate between Q1 and Q2 *Romeo and Juliet* for Oxford is like Thompson and Taylor's refusal to discriminate between Q1, Q2, and Folio *Hamlet* for Arden, and likewise resulted in an edition in which each early version is represented by a fully edited modernized script. This approach may be criticized for its effect of treating all the differences between the early editions as though they result from revision, when in fact some of them undoubtably are the effect only of textual corruption. But so long as the editorial premises that give rise to this approach are transparently conveyed to the reader, no harm is done. However, an edition such as Cox and Rasmussen's Arden *3 Henry 6* that eclectically

blends two early editions because it refuses to choose between them, and that preserves character name variation on purely ideological grounds, does its readers a disservice.

Except where revision justifies publication of “before” and “after” versions, readers are best served by modern editions that discriminate between early editions and either select for modernization and explication the one likely to contain least corruption, or else draw from two or more early editions the matter for which each is the most authoritative. The recent abandonment of the New Bibliographical principle of discriminating between early editions is Presentist in the worst sense of that term—howsoever it is couched as a celebration of textual plurality and diversity—and it vitiates modern critical editions. Far from suppressing diversity, well-made modern critical editions retain the plays’ power to generate new meanings in the present and future.

Notes

1. Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell, 1931).
2. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
3. Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare’s Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Reification* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 4–5.
4. Grady later clarified what he meant by Presentism and its good form, which acknowledges and embraces the scholar’s historical situatedness and is the same as good historicism (Hugh Grady, “Introduction: Shakespeare and Modernity,” in *Shakespeare and Modernity: Early Modern to Millenium*, ed. Hugh Grady, Accents on Shakespeare (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1–19). Later still and in collaboration with Terence Hawkes, Grady asserted that historical scholarship in the tradition of Ranke that attempts to reach back to understand the past in its own terms “can’t afford to examine the position in the present from which that manoeuvre is undertaken” (Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, “Introduction: Presenting Presentism,” in *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, Accents on Shakespeare (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1–5; 2). There is some tension between this dismissal of the legacy of Ranke and Grady’s earlier assertion that good Presentism and good historicism undertake exactly that examination. Ewan Fernie’s intervention in the debate about historicism suggested that rather than going back to the past and detailing its differences from our times, Shakespearians might attend to the opposite movement of his works coming forward in time to meet us now as an outdated yet ever-present alien in our world

- (Ewan Fernie, "Shakespeare and the Prospect of Presentism," *Shakespeare Survey*, 58 (2005): 169–84). Evelyn Gajowski too activated both senses of "present" (here and now) when introducing a collection of essays that use Presentism's approach to the otherness of the past—essentially, treating it as a dialogue with the present—to explore new ways of conceiving the othernesses against which normative gender (masculinity) and sexuality (heterosexuality) are defined and challenged in Shakespeare (Evelyn Gajowski, "The Presence of the Past," in *Presentism, Gender, and Sexuality in Shakespeare*, ed. Evelyn Gajowski, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1–22).
5. Margreta De Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, "The Materiality of Shakespeare's Text," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44 (1993): 255–83; 265–6.
 6. Terry Eagleton, "The Death of Self-criticism': Review of Stanley Fish *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995)," *Times Literary Supplement*, 4834 (24 November, 1995): 6–7; 6.
 7. Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 202–6.
 8. W. W. Greg, "The *Hamlet* Texts and Recent Work in Shakespearean Bibliography," *Modern Language Review*, 14 (1919): 380–85; 380.
 9. Gabriel Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare's Text: Twentieth-century Editorial Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
 10. Randall Martin, ed., *William Shakespeare Henry VI, Part Three*, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen, eds., *William Shakespeare King Henry VI Part 3*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2001).
 11. Martin, *William Shakespeare Henry VI, Part Three*, pp. 96–113.
 12. William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, STC 22273 (F1) (London: Isaac and William Jaggard for Edward Blount, John Smethwick, Isaac Jaggard, and William Aspley, 1623), p3v.
 13. Leah S. Marcus, "The Two Texts of Othello and Early Modern Constructions of Race," in *Textual Performances: The Modern Reproduction of Shakespeare's Drama*, ed. Lukas Erne and Margaret Jane Kidnie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 21–36; 23.
 14. Randall [as Random Clod] McLeod, "Information on Information," *TEXT: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship*, 5 (1991): 241–81; 246.
 15. De Grazia and Stallybrass, "The Materiality of Shakespeare's Text," p. 258.
 16. Meredith Skura, "Is There a Shakespeare After the New New Bibliography," in *Elizabethan Theater: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum*, ed. R. B. Parker and S. P. Zitner (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1996), pp. 169–83; 171.
 17. John Drakakis, "Afterword," in *Shakespeare and the Text*, ed. Andrew Murphy, Concise Companions to Literature and Culture (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 221–38; 229–30.

18. Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey, "Text and Stage: Shakespeare, Bibliography, and Performance Studies," *New Theatre Quarterly*, 9 (1993): 179–91; 191n18.
19. William Shakespeare, [Richard Duke of York] *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the Death of Good King Henrie the Sixt*, STC 21006 BEPD 138a (O) (London: P[eter] S[hort] for Thomas Millington, 1595), D3v–D4r; Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, p6r; Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare's Text*, pp. 104–6.
20. Martin, *William Shakespeare Henry VI*, Part Three, pp. 42–3.
21. Cox & Rasmussen, *William Shakespeare King Henry VI Part 3*, pp. 161–6.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 167–75.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 175–6.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
25. Martin, *William Shakespeare Henry VI*, Part Three, p. 133.
26. Shakespeare, [Richard Duke of York] *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the Death of Good King Henrie the Sixt*, E2r.
27. Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, q2v.
28. Martin, *William Shakespeare Henry VI*, Part Three, 5.1.81–2.
29. Cox and Rasmussen, *William Shakespeare King Henry VI Part 3*, 5.1.81–2.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
31. William Shakespeare and George Wilkins, [Pericles] *The Late, and Much Admired Play Called Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, STC 22334 BEPD 284a (Q1) (London: [William White and Thomas Creede] for Henry Gosson, 1609).
32. George Wilkins, *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*, STC 25638.5 (London: T[homas] P[urfoot] for Nat[haniel] Butter, 1608).
33. MacDonald P. Jackson, *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
34. John Klause, "Rhyme and the Authorship of *Pericles*," *Notes and Queries*, 255 (2010): 395–400.
35. Joseph A. Dane, "Bibliographical Note on George Wilkins, [Author] of the *Pericles*," *Notes and Queries*, 255 (2010): 401–3.
36. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor et al., *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 59.
37. Suzanne Gossett, ed., *Pericles*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), p. xvii.
38. Wells et al., *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, pp. 556–92.
39. Roger Warren, ed., *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 80.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
42. Claire Preston, "The Emblematic Structure of *Pericles*," *Word and Image*, 8.1 (1992): 21–38.
43. Duke of Rutland, *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, G. C. B., Preserved at Belvoir Castle*, vol. 4, 5 vols. (London: Historical Manuscripts Commission, 1905), p. 494.

44. Michael Leslie, "The Dialogue between Bodies and Souls: Pictures and Poesy in the English Renaissance," *Word and Image*, 1 (1985): 16–30; 24.
45. Inga-Stina Ewbank, "'These Pretty Devices': A Study of Masques in Plays," in *A Book of Masques in Honour of Allardyce Nicoll*, ed. T. J. B. Spencer and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967): pp. 405–48; 429.
46. Thomas Middleton, *Your Fiue Gallants*, STC 17907 BEPD 266a (London: [George Eld] for Richard Bonian, [1608]).
47. Shakespeare and Wilkins, [*Pericles*] *The Late, and Much Admired Play Called Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, G4v.
48. Gossett, *Pericles*, p. 48.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
51. Suzanne Gossett, "'To Foster is Not Always to Preserve': Feminist Inflections in Editing *Pericles*," in *In Arden: Editing Shakespeare: Essays in Honour of Richard Proudfoot*, ed. Ann Thompson and Gordon McMullan, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2003), pp. 65–80; 67.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
53. Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare's Text*, pp. 30–37.
54. R. B. McKerrow, *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare: A Study in Editorial Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), p. 7.
55. Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare's Text*, pp. 44–7.
56. W. W. Greg, "The Rationale of Copy-text," *Studies in Bibliography*, 3 (1950–1): 19–36, 28.
57. Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare's Text*, pp. 153–8, 162–6, 190–206.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 190–96, 264–5, 267–70.
59. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill L. Levenson, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
60. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2006); William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2006).
61. Paul Werstine, "The Textual Mystery of *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (1988): 1–26, 3–6.